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The effectiveness of teaching and learning history based on multicultural towards national integration in Malaysia

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Abstract

This study was conducted using a quasi experiment to determine the effects of teaching and learning history in regards to national integration in the multicultural society of Malaysia. The three multicultural perspectives used in the teaching and learning process contain culturally historical perspectives that are related to the aspect of cultural understanding, ethnic historical perspectives that are related to racial tolerance and national historical perspectives which include the Malaysian identity. The respondents for this study were multiracial students of the Malay, Chinese and Indian origin from two different schools in Selangor, Malaysia. 81 students were assigned to the treatment group while 80 students were at the control group. The experiment was conducted over 15 weeks. The pilot study showed that the items used in this study have a high level of reliability on the Cronbach alpha index, between 0.80-0.96. The findings showed a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between treatment group and control group for every aspects that was studied including gender and race. For the treatment group, the finding showed the highest mean for racial tolerance (mean = 4.32) compared to cultural understanding aspect (mean = 4.28), Malaysia identity aspects (mean = 4.27) and national integration aspects (mean = 4.26). Moreover, MANOVA test showed a significant difference for all aspects based on gender and race. The cultural understandings, racial tolerance and Malaysian identity perspectives showed a high correlation with national integration. The regression analysis showed that the cultural understanding is 55 %, the highest contribution compared to the other perspectives, such as Malaysian identity 11 % and racial tolerance 2.5%. The implication of the study revealed that a multicultural based approach to History in schools was positively accepted by multiracial students. Thus, it could be adopted as a teaching model to promote unity among this multiracial society and in the long run to achieve the “One Malaysia” vision.

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1. Introduction

Over the years, few steps had been taken to empower education as the main element and as a solidarity agent for racial integration in Malaysia. The implementation of policies drew back from the National Education Policies of

the Razak Report 1956, and up until the current agenda to strengthen primary schools and the current concept of 1Malaysia put forward little had been offered in education to enhance unity for the country.

Educational changes are inevitable, in line with political development and the introduction of new policies, however, the basic role of education as a socialization agent and disseminator of universal values is sustained through time.

As a multiracial country, it is important for Malaysia to rely on education as the main force to build an integrated generation. It is not easy to establish cultural congeniality, with a clear understanding of the ethos of nations and the appreciation of racial integration through academic subjects. Indeed, it needs understanding and historical knowledge of the nation, and thus, the History has become critical and has been upgraded as a core subject by the government. Yet, it is sad to say that the current teaching methodology and teaching quality of History are still questionable and far from attaining its objective as a national integration tool, as it should be.

This is due to the frailty of teaching quality and lack of teachers' initiative to improve and deliver the subject effectively. The majority of teachers are still using lecturing techniques and depending solely on the textbooks, unable to prepare certain activities to encourage interaction among students of various races. As such, the teaching quality is still under attack from critics and its role as a medium to promote racial tolerance and cultural congeniality remains ineffective. In addition, the acceptance of "one Malaysia identity" through History is still at the pre-stage and only at the surface due to syllabus constraints and limited efforts made by the teachers.

This study is an initiative taken as a response to the current teaching situation. Apart from that, this study aims to provide a model for teaching History and a learning module to empower and effectively inculcate values of cultural understanding, racial tolerance, the "one Malaysia" identity and national integration among students through a multicultural approach based on the multicultural theory.

2. Problem Statement

History is an important foundation in enhancing national integration in Malaysia as a multiracial country. However, the aspects of teaching and learning History in the Malaysian educational system are still examination oriented and ineffective to inculcate values in the context of racial unity. According to Abdul Rahim Abdul Rashid (1993), students are disinterested to learn History because there are a lot of facts to be memorized. Whereas, Khoo Kay Kim (2001) had seen the failure of History as being due to it being unable to achieve its objectives, this being due to the fact that teachers fail to choose appropriate teaching methods and their inability to create a lively learning experience.

Rohana Zubir (1999) concluded that the frailty of teaching History is caused by the teachers' inability to reach out students' needs through inappropriate teaching aids, practicing a one way teaching method and failing to provide creative activities to motivate students to learn. Abdullah (1991) came to a similar conclusion stating that History failed to create students who are well-aware and appreciate national values due to too much emphasis on examinations (cognitive) and a disregard for the affective aspects in learning. In addition, Aziz Deraman (1994), when discussing the people and Malaysian culture, stated that the failure of History to overcome racial prejudice, to unite and establish integration would be inevitable if the teachers fail to deliver the subject through effective approaches.

Findings of other researches done by Anuar Ahmad et al. (2009), Kamaruddin Hussin (1997), and Abdul Raop Dalip (1993) revealed that teachers did not have enough skills when teaching History and this led to their failure to inculcate the values in History sufficiently to promote racial unity. Azwan Ahmad (2005) stated similar findings, that teachers did not focus on students' activities, instead they focused on delivering the subjects through a lecturing method. This led to a lack of innovation and also caused students to learn History passively. Based on the literature reviews, it is timely to suggest that a diverse approach in teaching History needs to be implemented especially in focusing on national integration. Thus, a multicultural-based approach from the perspectives of cultural history, ethnic history, national history and national integration, is essential to overcome the problems and in providing an alternative model to teaching and learning History.

Based on the viewpoints discussed, it is confirmed that a new comprehensive teaching approach combined with multiracial perspectives of cultural history, ethnic history and national history needs to be built to teach History. This approach needs to be developed with a clear mind concerning suitability to students' diverse needs and at the same time aimed to fulfill the objectives of teaching History in the sense of inculcating cultural values and establishing the process of racial integration.

3. Purpose of the Study

This study is to examine the effectiveness of teaching History by using the multicultural approach based on the perspective of cultural history from the aspect of cultural understanding; the perspective of ethnic history, from the aspect of racial tolerance, from the perspective of national history and from the aspect of Malaysian identity towards achieving the mission of national integration. This study identifies the significant differences of all the aspects in terms of ethnicity and gender variables on the control and treatment groups. In addition, this study examines the relationship of the three aspects and their contributions towards the establishment of national integration.

4. Research Framework

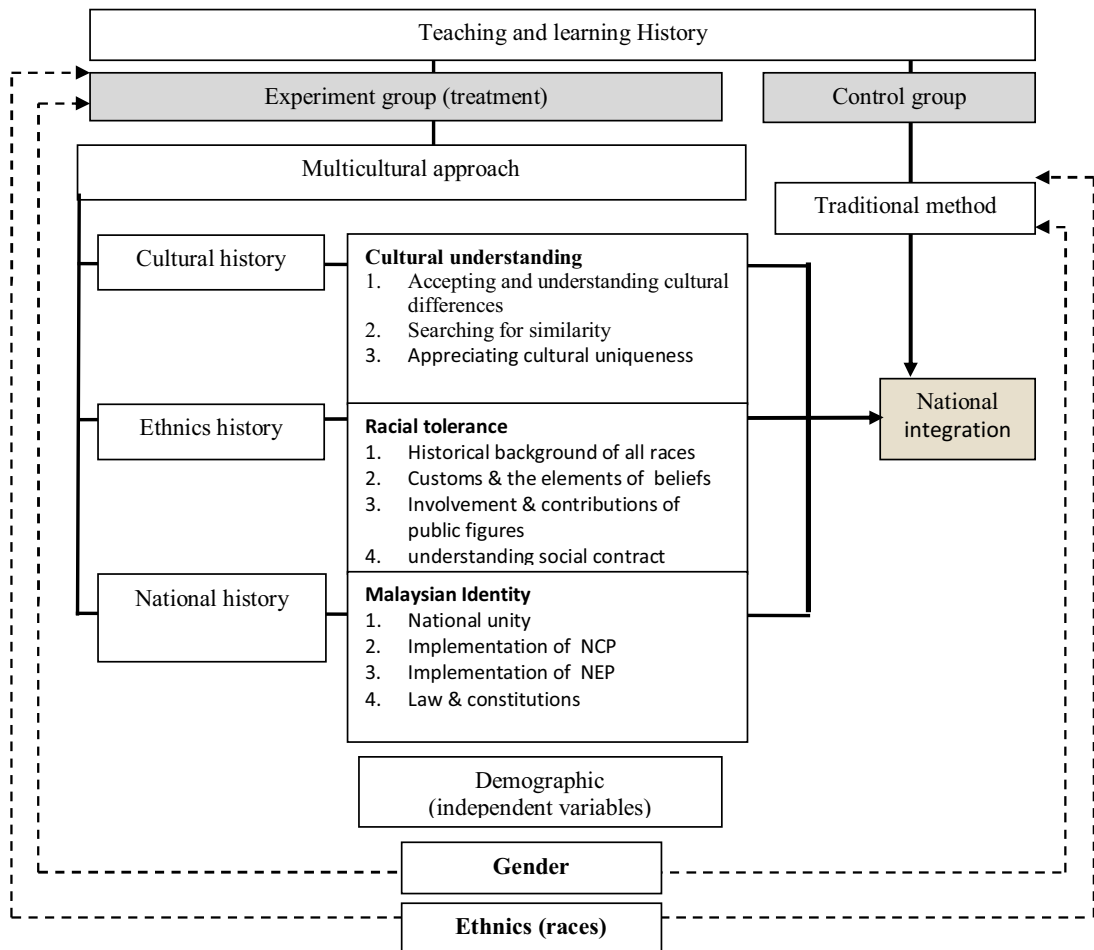


Table 2: Research Framework

The research framework shows the research design which divided into two groups, there are treatment and control groups. The experiment is aimed to identify the treatment effects including multicultural approach from the perspective of cultural history in terms of cultural understanding; from the perspective of ethnic history in terms of racial tolerance and from the perspective of national history in the aspect of Malaysian identity towards national integration values.

Cultural understanding aspect consists of 3 characteristics; the aspects of racial tolerance and Malaysian identity consist of 4 characteristics respectively. All of the characteristics are the question items of the questionnaire, which was developed for the pre and post tests. They are also referred to in developing the teaching module of multicultural approach for History subject. Whereas, the demographic aspects studied in this research are regarding gender and three major races- the Malays, Chinese and Indians.

5. Literature Review

Lawrence Blum (1982), defined multicultural as an understanding, appreciation and evaluation on one's culture; an appreciation and inquisition towards other ethnic cultural elements, with the purpose to evaluate, to give opinions yet not to fully agree with but to see how other communities of certain ethnicities inculcate their values to be practiced by the whole community.

In the context of Malaysia, Tan Sri Samad Idris (1979) defined it as a universal understanding towards others' cultural elements by searching for the differences, similarities and other shared values. Respecting and accepting others' unique cultural elements are important practices and at the same time searching and researching for elements to be shared and practiced by all ethnic groups in making a national identity. This is the model of multiculturalism in the Malaysian context.

The concept and idea of the Malaysian nation state has been established since the formation of Malaysia, it is the nation concept to highlight the diversity of ethnicities and cultures, and yet integrated to create cultural congeniality and racial tolerance in the process of developing an identity of one nation (Mohd Taib Osman, 1965). Due to the concept, every race is taught to make effort in accepting and respecting the differences and appreciating the uniqueness of the other ethnic groups, which are indeed the framework of the national culture (Abu Bakar Nordin, 1994).

Teachers are the agents of unity and cultural transformation for students, and thus, education is an important medium to uphold the ambitions of unity and national integrity (Chai Hon Chai, 1977). The realists admitted that teachers should initiate the moves toward achieving the national goal and they also uphold the nations' transformational agenda (Ahmad Rafaai Ayudin, 2009). In this case, the History curriculum is the best platform to inculcate a certain awareness and understanding efforts regarding ethnic solidarity and a united nation.

According to Abdul Rahman Embong (2000), cultural behaviour could be studied based on three indicators, they are: (1) spoken language, (2) religions and beliefs, and (3) customs and heritages. Those three indicators establish ethnic and racial identities and show their unique characteristics. Mohd Taib Osman (1969) identified that cultural changes in Malaysian societies were caused by two or more cultural contacts through the process of: (1) adaptation, (2) diffusion and (3) assimilation. In addition, according to Asma Abdullah & Azizan Asmuni, (2005), cultural diversity refers to a kind of acceptance, and appreciating one's culture. Whereas, Stavenhagen (1986) admitted that cultural diversity is a social reality for a multiracial society.

Creating a national history in Malaysia is a social contract that needs consensus, acceptance and commitment by all parties in order to protect the exclusive rights of the bumiputras while yet protecting the rights of other races (Tajul Arifin Noordin and Nor Aini Dan, 1992). Khoo Kay Kim (2002) stated that national unity is a process to unite various ethnic and social groups through national symbols and an ideology which created the same values and a solo identity for the sake of national unity. Unity is related to the adaptation and cultural assimilation and it takes a long time to establish understanding and racial tolerance. According to Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, (2007), the word integration refers to a sense of planned solidarity built from various elements to become a solid and absolute one. In the national context, it refers to racial unity and belongingness as a new identity is created as the national identity.

6. Methodology

This research is a quasi-experiment design and divided into groups of respondents namely the treatment and control groups. The treatment group consists of 81 students, whereas the control group consists of 80 students from

two secondary schools under the Ministry of Education. Both groups are represented by the Malay, Chinese and Indian students. The treatment group underwent 15 weeks of experiments. A set of questionnaires used as the instruments to measure the effectiveness of teaching History in both the pre and post tests. The questionnaire consists various aspects from the perspectives of cultural history, ethnics' history, national history and national integration.

The multicultural teaching module for the treatment group measures cultural history from the aspect of cultural understanding which consists of three characteristics as: i) accepting and understanding cultural differences, (ii) cultural similarities among races and (iii) appreciating the uniqueness of multiculturalism. Whereas, the perspective of ethnic history from the aspect of racial tolerance consists of the following characteristics: (i) demographic and cultural backgrounds (ii) customs and the elements of beliefs (iii) involvement and contributions of model personalities of all races and iv) social contract agreed by all races. The perspective of national history in terms of Malaysian identity consists of three characteristics, as follow : (i) establishing national unity, ii) implementation of national culture, iii) implementation of New Economic Policy and constitutions and also national integration which has been implemented for the Form two students that consists of three chapters on exploitation of lands by the British colonialists (chapter 6), the people's struggle against colonization (chapter 7) and rise of the spirit of nationalism (Chapter 8)

A multicultural teaching approach consists all of the three perspectives, integrated with activities and teaching aids. Contents of the first aspect focus on teachers' explanations by linking the three perspectives with the available content to create awareness among students of various races towards national integration. Secondly, the activities aspect focuses on students, where the researchers had provided students' activities module for every topic to be implemented by teachers in their classrooms.

The activities were done individually and in group including brainstorming, role playing, and public speaking. The activities were aimed to apply all the knowledge based on students' understanding of the three perspectives. In addition, the activities encouraged involvement of all students regardless of their races in the sense of promoting cooperation and tolerance. The third aspect is the current teaching aids, prepared by the researchers, combining the original information with current issues and to relate the three perspectives with national integration.

A comprehensive teaching plan or teaching module was carefully planned to execute a multicultural teaching of the History subject. Apart from that, elements of cultural diversity towards national integration were also included as one of teaching objectives.

7. The Results and Discussion

- i) The levels of culturally historical perspectives from the aspect of cultural understanding; the ethnic history perspectives from the aspect of racial tolerance; the national history perspectives from the aspects of Malaysian Identity and National Integration.

Table 1 Comparison of the mean scores between the control and treatment groups on the aspects of multicultural

Multicultural aspects	Control group		Treatment group	
	mean	level	mean	level
Cultural understanding	3.13	average	4.28	High
Racial tolerance	3.09	average	4.39	High
Malaysian Identity	3.29	average	4.27	High

Findings of this study revealed that the perspectives level among students in the treatment group shows a positive change compared to those in the control groups. The mean scores of all the multicultural aspects are shown in table 1 below. This finding is supported by a statement that teaching History needs a new approach and to be more proactive in bringing changes in students especially in the efforts to disseminate cultural values and racial integration.

Changes in all of the levels of multicultural aspects influenced positive changes towards understanding and appreciation of national integration values. This is revealed by the finding which shows improvement in the mean scores = 4.26 (high) for the treatment group compared to 3.23 (average) for the control group. This finding revealed

that teaching History needs a new approach so that the contents focus more on achieving the goal of establishing national integration. This finding is similar with a statement by Kymlicka (2002) who stated that a multicultural approach featuring the spirit of understanding, appreciation on racial identities, and conforming to ideas among groups should become the main foundation of national integration.

ii) Differences of multicultural aspect in the treatment group

A MANOVA analysis was used to see the differences in all of the perspectives. The analysis was to see overall differences in terms of gender in the treatment group for the perspectives of cultural history from the aspect of cultural understanding; ethnic history from the aspect of racial tolerance; and the perspective of national history from the aspects of Malaysian identity and national integration.

Table 2 Result of MANOVA test on differences in cultural understanding, racial tolerance, Malaysian identity and national integration based on gender in the treatment group.

Dependent variables	Type III	df	Mean	F	Sig.
GENDER					
Cultural understanding	.861	1	0.861	13.671	0.000
Racial tolerance	1.966	1	1.966	36.079	0.000
Malaysian identity	1.785	1	1.785	26.365	0.000
National integration	1.638	1	1.638	23.988	0.000

Table 2 shows a positive result in the treatment group in all multicultural aspects, where it indicates there is a significant difference between genders. This reveals that gender plays an important role in the multicultural aspects, and thus it is important for teachers to take this matter into consideration in inculcating elements of cultural diversity and dividing activities equally among students in the classrooms. Results of the Turkey Post Hoc test below show the difference in terms of races.

Table 3 Results of the Turkey Post Hoc test on the differences of perspectives between the treatment and control groups in terms of races.

Dependent variables	(I) race	(J) race	differences mean (I-J)	Error	Sig.
Cultural understanding	Malays	Chinese	.2689(*)	.05648	.000
		Indians	.1154	.05648	.105
	Chinese	Malays	-.2689(*)	.05648	.000
		Indian	-.1535(*)	.06368	.045
	Indians	Malays	-.1154	.05648	.105
		Chinese	.1535(*)	.06368	.045
Racial tolerance	Malays	Chinese	.0803	.05012	.248
		Indian	.1591(*)	.05012	.005
	Chinese	Malays	-.0803	.05012	.248
		Indians	.0788	.05651	.346
	Indians	Malays	-.1591(*)	.05012	.005
		Chinese	-.0788	.05651	.346
Malaysian identity	Malays	Chinese	.1966(*)	.05262	.001
		Indians	.1804(*)	.05262	.002
	Chinese	Malays	-.1966(*)	.05262	.001
		Indians	-.0163	.05933	.959
	Indians	Malays	-.1804(*)	.05262	.002
		Chinese	.0163	.05933	.959
National integration	Malays	Chinese	.2433(*)	.05369	.000
		Indians	.2411(*)	.05369	.000
	Chinese	Malays	-.2433(*)	.05369	.000
		Indians	-.0022	.06053	.999

Indians	Malays	-.2411(*)	.05369	.000
	Chinese	.0022	.06053	.999

Based on the analysis of the Turkey Post Hoc test as shown in table 3 and the ANOVA analysis to see the differences in terms of gender, it is revealed that there is a significant difference between the Chinese and Malay students with the mean score = 0.2689, sig 0.000<0.05. It also shows a significant difference between the Chinese and Indian students with the mean score = -0.1535, sig 0.045<0.05. The mean value of the Indian students is higher than the Chinese students. Whereas, there is no significant difference between the other groups towards dependent variables of cultural history perspective, from the aspect of cultural understanding ($p>.05$). This finding found that there are different perspectives among the major races –the Malays, Chinese and Indians toward cultural history from the aspect of cultural understanding; this indicates that the Malay and Chinese students have different opinions on the cultural aspects respectively, the same goes between the Chinese and Indian students. This finding is in line with Aziz Deraman (2004) who stated that when people understood the history of the nation and ethnicity, this would influence a better perspective, reduce prejudice and create solidarity.

There is also a significant difference of perspectives between the Malay and Indian students on ethnic history from the aspect of racial tolerance, with the different mean score of 0.1591, sig 0.005<0.05. The mean value of the Malays is higher than the Indians in terms of racial tolerance. Whereas, there is no significant difference of perspectives between the other groups towards dependent variable of ethnics history from the aspect of racial tolerance ($p>.05$). The spirit of tolerance is more obvious among the Malay and Indian students as compared with the Chinese students. It was found that the Chinese students have their own principles and ego compared to the Malay and Indian students, who seem ready to tolerate the cultural and racial relationship aspects.

The result also shows a significant difference of perspectives between the Malay and Chinese students on national history from the aspect of Malaysian identity, with the different mean score of 0.1966, sig 0.001<0.05. The mean value of the Malays is higher than the Chinese students in terms of Malaysian identity. There is also a significant difference of perspectives between the Malay and Indian students on the aspect of Malaysian identity, with the different mean score of 0.1804, sig 0.002<0.05. The mean value of the Malays is higher than the Indian students in terms of Malaysian identity. However, there is no significant difference of perspectives between the other groups towards dependent variable of Malaysian identity ($p>.05$). This result revealed that the Malay students are more aware of the Malaysian spirit and identity concepts when compared with the Chinese and Indian students. However, all of the races have agreed and are accepting the idea of one identity as an element of unity and solidarity. Green and Troup (1999), stated that it is very important for a multiracial and multicultural country to share the same identity.

This study also revealed that there is a significant difference of perspectives between the Malay and Chinese students on the aspect of national integration, with the different mean score of 0.2433, sig 0.00<0.05. The mean value of the Malays is higher than the Chinese students in terms of national integration. There is also a significant difference of perspectives between the Malay and Indian students on the aspect of national integration, with the different mean score of 0.2411, sig 0.000<0.05. However, the mean value of the Malays is higher than the Indian students. Nevertheless, the result indicates only a slight improvement when comparing the difference between the Chinese and Indian students, in terms of appreciation on the national integration values.

The improvement and positive changes of perspectives towards the four elements are due to several factors: (1) changes in the style and teaching approach, (2) existence elements of multicultural values (3) enrichment of information from other sources and additional materials (4) new social activities involving students of all races.

- iii) Relationship among the perspectives – cultural history perspective from the aspect of cultural understanding; ethnics history perspective from the aspect of racial tolerance and national history perspective from the aspect of Malaysian identity towards national integration.

Correlation analysis was conducted to reveal the relationship among all of the perspectives studied. The result shows that there is a strong relationship among all of the perspectives toward appreciation of national integration values. This finding indicates the need to practice a multicultural approach with a possibility of a strong relationship to disseminate national integration values. This finding supports a statement from Lin (1993) who stated that teaching needs to be changed in meeting the integration goal by promoting awareness and appreciation on multicultural values of all races. Contents of the curriculum need to be enriched with the perspective of cultural

history from the aspect of cultural understanding; ethnic history perspective from the aspect of racial tolerance and national history perspective from the aspect of Malaysian identity towards national integration.

- iv) Contributions of the perspectives – cultural history perspective from the aspect of cultural understanding; ethnic history perspective from the aspect of racial tolerance and national history perspective from the aspect of Malaysian identity towards national integration

The result identified that cultural history perspective from the aspect of cultural understanding contributes 55 percent (Beta = 0.399, $t = 4.639$, Sig = 0.000 and $R = 0.744$). This finding revealed that the level of cultural understanding among students is good and positive; in fact it is the foundation to develop other aspects effortlessly. The national history perspective from the aspect of Malaysian identity contributes only 11 percent (Beta = 0.282, $t = 2.689$ and $R = 0.817$) which means it is still at the average level. This finding indicated that the people are still not ready to accept a uniform identity, and to embrace it as part of their lives, unless they are at formal occasions. And thus, awareness campaigns with detailed explanations should be conducted from time to time.

Whereas, the ethnic history perspective from the aspect of racial tolerance contributes a small percentage at 2.5 percent (Beta = 0.258, $t = 2.521$ and $R = 0.832$). And such, racial tolerance issues need to be wholly addressed. It is unacceptable if only the Malays who show high tolerance when the other non-Malays tolerate fairly poorly. Serious effort needs to be made to eliminate racial prejudice, and at the same time put forward some ideas to enhance racial tolerance.

According to Pallant (2005), there are other contributing factors that were not studied in this research. Based on the findings of this study, a conclusion can be made that teaching cultural history has greatly promoted cultural understanding among students that will have a huge impact on national integration.

8. Implications and Suggestions

Several concerned parties agreed that teachers and school play important roles in developing values and disseminating cultures to students. Due to that, teaching should have a huge impact on the students cognitively and affectively change their attitudes in terms of what is taught.

The implementation of History by using a multicultural approach is an innovation and a pro-active effort to support the government in developing and establishing a strong cooperation among young generations of all races. This matter has become increasingly important because there is evidence that unity and national integration can be materialized through a multicultural approach. Fletcher (1989), Kaye (1996) and Callan (1997) concluded that History education and nation-state building are important mediums to promote the people to act accordingly with the government's needs.

The development of the History teaching module based on a multicultural approach is an alternative model which needs to be well-developed in the road to build a more comprehensive teaching module to be used by teachers in the History teaching and learning process. Results of this research have revealed a positive implication in developing national integration. Anderson (1983), had also agreed that adding certain elements of cultural diversity in teaching, needed serious consideration by highlighting relevant concepts of ethnic history with the current ways of life.

Interested researchers are welcomed to conduct further research by extending the research scope and reducing the research limitations through various methods. For instance, multicultural teaching could be integrated with computer-based teaching methods by using multicultural teaching software in line with the syllabus. This method also needs to be developed and used by teachers in History teaching. This study also provides baseline information for researchers to create other more comprehensive and innovative methods.

The Multicultural approach highlights equal roles and contributions of all races in establishing the nation-state of Malaysia and indirectly shows appreciation towards all races and reduces racial prejudice. Younger generations could be taught to accept racial differences and thus, appreciate other races as one nation of Malaysia. This in return would guide students to develop mutual respect and understanding diversity of racial cultures

9. Conclusion

Based on the discussion, research findings and implications, there is clear evidence that a multicultural approach for the History subject could enhance national integration among multiracial students in Malaysia. However, the

multicultural approach needs to be adjusted with the available contents, and also, the historical facts need improvement to make them acceptable to all kinds of students. It is with great hope that this multicultural approach will be implemented comprehensively at all schools under the Malaysian Ministry of Education as an effort to develop students with positive attitudes towards achieving the goal of 1Malaysia concept.

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